

# Homosexuality among syphilitic patients

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The world-wide increase in cases of early syphilis, and among these the higher incidence in male homosexuals, is also apparent in Hungary. Statistics in Budapest for the 6 years 1963–1968 show that, while in 1963–64 not one homosexual case was reported, in 1965 already 20 per cent., in 1966 27 per cent., and in 1967 32 per cent. of cases were male homosexuals. In 1968 their incidence decreased a little to 27 per cent., but the evidence suggests that there was no real decrease, merely that some males did not admit their homosexual inclinations.

In the last 4 years 496 male homosexuals have been seen in our clinics, some of them syphilitic patients with clinical symptoms, and the others sexual partners in danger of infection; 21 per cent. came spontaneously and the rest as a result of contact-tracing.

This comparatively large series of cases, interrogated very thoroughly in the course of the investigation for contacts, seemed to be worthy of statistical analysis. We therefore made out a Hollerith punch card for each patient, and I propose to report on the findings from this statistical survey.

From a sociological point of view the representation of various occupations among our cases is interesting. The large proportion of personnel in the catering industry (16 per cent.) is expected. Industrial workers accounted for 12 per cent., but considering the high percentage of such workers in the population in general, this is not significant. It is more interesting that in the industrial group the number of unskilled workers was nearly as high as that of skilled workers. According to our observations many homosexual prostitutes choose the designation of unskilled worker as a cover, but such persons are characterized by good clothes unsuitable to their alleged occupation, and by their attitude and fastidious behaviour. The high incidence of homosexuals among theatre personnel is also to be expected, but according to our data there is also a large proportion of medical workers, not only male nurses and surgeon's assistants, but also many physicians. The percentage of travellers and transport workers is also high.

When the family status and sexual behaviour of the patients was examined, it was found that 75 were married when the infection was acquired; 49 of these had regular heterosexual intercourse with their wives, but 26 had homosexual intercourse only, which was proved by the fact that the wives remained free of infection although the husbands had florid early syphilis with clinical symptoms. The ratio of divorced

males was also high, but most of the homosexual patients had never married. The 75 married patients included nineteen with one child and eight with more than one. About two-thirds of the patients played an active role, but many were of the "versatile" type, indicating that the mode of sexual satisfaction among male homosexuals is unstable.

The localization of the chancre was related to these data. Corresponding to the higher percentage of "active" patients, the chancre was found in most cases on the penis and in only about 10 per cent. in the anus. There were few chancres in the mouth, and few on the skin.

Our data concerning promiscuity showed that most of those with recent syphilis admitted having two or three partners, but nine had had more than twenty partners while still infectious. The promiscuity of male homosexuals, according to our observations and corresponding with the data of Károlyi (1969), is greater than that of heterosexual men, but even so it is less than that of syphilitic females.

Our homosexual patients were also characterized by the high incidence of re-infection, which was five times as frequent as that among heterosexuals.

Our data are not of course characteristic for homosexuals in general, but only for those who have acquired a recent syphilitic infection or re-infection. These form a special group, who according to Károlyi are predestined to contract venereal infection on account of their sexual behaviour. Their homosexual inclination is only one of these determining factors.

## Summary

The percentage of male homosexuals among syphilitic patients in Budapest increased from 0 to 32 per cent. between 1963 and 1967; the social and clinical features of 496 male homosexual syphilitics and their contacts are analysed.

## Reference

KÁROLYI, I. (1969) *Orv. Hetil.*, **110**, 225.

## L'homosexualité chez les syphilitiques

### SOMMAIRE

Le pourcentage des homosexuels mâles parmi les syphilitiques, à Budapest, est passé de 0 à 32 pour cent de 1963 à 1967: les particularités sociales et cliniques de 496 malades et de leurs contacts sont analysés.